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INDIFFERENCE TO CHRISTIAN OBLIGATION.

ONE great object of the *Christian Freeman* is to strengthen what is right, and to put down what is wrong, in the different churches. Wherever we discover any "good thing toward the Lord God of Israel," we shall take measures to increase its living power upon the heart of him in whom it is found: and wherever the professing Christian furnishes melancholy proof of some unholy influence at work within, we shall endeavour, by a faithful exhibition of the strong recognised claims of the Bible, to strike at the root of the formidable evil, and eradicate it from the soul.

When we complain, as we do with heavy heart, of *indifference to Christian obligation*, we would not be understood to apply to the whole visible body of Christ the same sweeping indiscriminate censure. Christians there are, some of whom it is our privilege to know and honour, who are actuated by a sacred and searching regard to the vows under which their souls are solemnly bound. Nor is it a heartless and compulsory service which they yield to their divine Master. It is not the obedience which ruthless despotism wrings from reluctant hearts, and prostrate and trampled minds. No: the men whom we respect as living evidence of the power of Christian principle, have been conducted, by the guidance of the Spirit, to large and enlightened views of the religion of the cross; and they, therefore, rejoicingly do the will of their Father who is in heaven. God has not given them the "spirit of fear, but of power and of *love*, and of a sound mind." We do not, then, fasten down our charges upon universal Christendom; but we request all into whose hands this paper may come, to weigh its statements deliberately, for the purpose, if not of correcting their views,

at least of deepening their sense, of Christian obligation. The following considerations, as they arise natively out of the very idea of a religious profession, appear to rank among the most obvious and useful:—

I. The Christian is bound to maintain the life of godliness in his soul. What is Christianity? What are the demands of the Gospel upon us? Is the religion which we profess a mere tissue of ceremonial observances, and can its claims be satisfied by a purely "bodily exercise?" Does the religion of Jesus repudiate all attention to the thoughts of the mind, and the affections of the heart? Or, on the contrary, does it not recognise, as a cardinal object, the enlightening of the understanding in the knowledge of Christ, and the renewing of the soul "after the image of God." There must be vital godliness. Without this, all the *piety* attributed to us by the imagination of ourselves or others, will issue in "vanity and vexation of spirit." Our pretensions to sanctity may be of the most imposing character, and the world may stamp it as a sort of heresy to question the genuineness of our religious views and attachments. But what of all this, if, in God's sight, we are strangers to the efficacy of divine grace, practically unacquainted with the sanctifying power of the truth, and in our souls cherishing an obstinate defiance to the awakenings of the Holy Spirit. There must be the devotedness of the heart to God, and that devotedness must appear in the conduct. This is not a statement, of the nature of which Christians can plead ignorance. They *know* the spirituality of the divine law; they *know* the extent of its holy requirements; they *know* vital godliness to be wholly indispensable; and, therefore, they are the more inexcusable in going the sleeply round of religious exercise, without one principle of the immortal life and energy of heart-Christianity. Let those who are called after the Saviour examine themselves upon this point. Do they often try to feel that they are not their own—that they are bought with a price—that they are bound to glorify God with their bodies, and with their spirits which are God's? Does the hour of peaceful meditation bring them into frequent communion with their own souls, while they contemplate the near realities of another world? Do they feel the commandments, which are holy and just and true, to have taken an everlasting hold on their faithful and affectionate obedience? As the happy result of many hours of solemn thought, have they ascertained that the discharge of their duty to God springs from the effectual operation of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus? Does the regular train of their reflection on

the Creator and Redeemer, bear testimony to the mingled power of supreme love and deep veneration? Where these are wanting, vital godliness is wanting, the claim to all but the Christian name is negatived, and the soul is in jeopardy of eternal death. Let the professed disciples of Jesus, then, look to their own state, lest it be an awfully perilous one; and, as they value their eternal redemption, let them beware of the first approaches of *indifference to Christian obligation.*

II. Christians solemnly bind themselves to attend on the ordinances of God. The first symptom of the weakness or absence of Christian principle, discovers itself in the heart. But man has no direct access to the hearts of others, and he may be deceived even in regard to his own. Such a mixture of feeling and motive may exist within, as to baffle all his powers of mental analysis. God alone can, in the high appropriated sense of the terms, "search the heart and try the reins." We have spoken slightingly of the *mere* observance of outward religious ordinances: the neglect of them we stamp, not *we*, but the Word of God, in terms of strongest condemnation. The man who trusts in ordinances as the sole ground of his hope, trusts in a broken reed: he who neglects them, spurns with insolence the authority of Jehovah. The middle course is at once safe and Scriptural. The ordinances must be observed punctually and carefully, as God's appointed means of communicating grace and truth to the mind. Now, to this course every Christian is distinctly and irrevocably pledged before heaven and earth. The parent, on every recurrence of the administration of baptism to his child, binds his soul to the faithful discharge of Christian duty in the sanctuary, in the domestic circle, and in secret. What becomes of this bond? He has entered into covenant with God, and (can it be believed?) he returns to his home the self-same day, and *dares*, yes, deliberately *dares* to allow his family to retire to rest, without assembling them around the family altar, to praise God for the blessings of another day, and to plead an interest in the pardoning mercy of the atonement. Where is the force of God's threatenings, and man's engagements? "Pour out thy fury upon the heathen, and upon the *families* that call not on thy name!" Has this imprecation lost its power? Is that God whose spirit inspired the terrors of the law, unable to sheath the flaming sword of justice in the bowels of these *sanctimonious* and *Christian* despisers?

Neglect or irregularity of attendance on Christian ordinances infallibly indicates a loose state of religious feeling. This is admitted on all hands. The world knows it and the world be-

lieves it. Such an overt act is proof strong as Holy Writ of a decayed or dead state of spiritual affection. It is proof which the human mind as at present constituted is incompetent to reject. This illustrates the wisdom as well as the condescension of God in suspending on an overt act, instead of on an inward feeling, the test of the obedience of our first parents. The moving of an unholy desire in the bosom of perfect man would have equally sealed his fate under the government of a holy God; but the act perpetrated, at once testified the estrangement of Adam's heart, and justified before the universe the infliction of merited punishment. The positive violation of law and covenant convinced angels and devils—nay, compelled our first parents themselves to admit, that no other course but that of divine infliction was left open to the Moral Governor of the world. On the same principle, breach of covenant engagements to the present hour affords irrefragable testimony of "a heart not right with God."

We have often reflected with horror on the apparent ease and carelessness with which multitudes in professing Christendom violate their own positive Christian engagements. What do they mean? On the most solemn occasions they promise, before God and man, for example, to maintain family worship. Yet family worship is neglected! What is this but downright robbery of God? An engagement entered into voluntarily, and with all the solemnity of an oath, is shamefully broken without the slightest compunction. What would society think of such conduct? Would they not brand such an offender with the indelible characters of *dishonesty?* Would they not write "*perjured*" on his forehead, to warn mankind against becoming the dupes of his hollow, treacherous heart? Are Christians sensible of the deep guilt which they contract in the sight of God, by their flagrant breaches of all that is most sacred? "Oh, that they were wise, that they understood this." There is an infatuation among men, in religious matters, that is slaying its ten thousands. Let Church members, let all who bear the name of Jesus, beware. Hell may be the issue of the first blush of indifference to Christian obligation.

III. Christians are under a solemn bond to maintain uprightness and truth in all their civil and social transactions. We have before our minds, at the present moment, some cheering instances of the growth of right religious feeling. Did not the minister of the Gospel occasionally meet such instances, his mind were in danger of becoming a prey to despondency. At the same time there are many discouragements, and none more

formidable than those which arise out of an unhallowed and senseless abridgment of the operation of Christian principle. The Sabbath, we shall suppose, is devoted to God. That is well. There is something of appropriate devotional feeling in attendance on its public and private services. That is better. But the Sabbath ended, all its exercises pass away like a vision of the night before the dawn of morning, and leave us during the week to struggle amid a waking and busy crowd of worldly considerations. Multitudinous experience testifies that these things are so. Well, we ask, is this the genuine product of Christianity breathing its balmy breath on all the feelings of the heart, and on all the economy of life? Is this the salt of God's word cast into the spring of moral action, and sending forth sweet and healthful streams? Think of a *dishonest* Christian! A Christian forgetful of his duty to God and man! A Christian, whose maniac motto is, "The week exclusively for the world; a piece of the Sabbath for heaven!" We raise our voice against divorcing religion from civil life. What is it but to snap asunder the ties of Christian obligation, and to give way to a most subtle and powerful temptation of Satan? Are we free from responsibility to God in our civil and social transactions? The Bible reveals certain great principles of action, which are as applicable to agriculture, commerce, civil policy, as they are to the immediate service of God. Let these principles be violated, and so sure as "there's a Power above us," punishment will tread upon the heels of the violation. "Jehovah is God of the hills," said the Assyrians in the great profundity of their wisdom, "but not God of the valleys." What says the oracular *unchristianism* of many professed believers? It says that the Lord is the God of the Sabbath, but not the God of the week—that the Lord is the God of prayer and praise, and generally of sanctuary observances, but not the God of ordinary life and deportment—that the Lord is the God of secret devotion, but not the God of family worship! When will even Christians act upon the momentous truth, that accountability to God runs along the whole line of our terrestrial existence; and that not a moment is exempted from its all-penetrating glance? When will Christians learn that the actions of the week are recorded in the book of God with as much exactness as those of the Sabbath? When will they feel that the withering frown of Heaven is directed against an act of fraud as pointedly as it is directed against an act of Sabbath profanation? "Know thou that for *all these things* God will bring thee into judgment." "For God shall bring *every work* into

judgment, with *every secret thing*, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

Indifference to Christian obligation is an evil of immense magnitude. The man who has brought his mind through the terrible and degrading process of dealing treacherously in the things of God, cannot be expected to deal honourably and faithfully in the things of men. It is ruinous to moral principle to accustom oneself to the dereliction of duty, and especially in the high concerns of God and eternity; and when such conduct is a grievous breach of our own distinct engagements, the effect is proportionably awful. A fool may repose confidence in the man who has violated the covenant of his God; a wise man never can. He who is dishonest in religion, will be dishonest also in the world; and his principles, generally adopted, will break up the relations of society, or establish a system of conventional and publicly allowed robbery. And then, alas! for souls—precious, immortal souls.

We could select from our acquaintance, some happy illustrations of the decided and cordial recognition of Christian obligation. It stays the heart in which it resides on the Lord our God; it gives firmness to the texture of Christian and general character; it is the root of that decision which confers incalculable benefit on its gifted possessor; it fortifies against the temptations of Satan, and the allurements of the world; it teaches the genuine Christian to say, with the feelings which inspired the bosom of Joshua, "Let others do as they will, as for me and my house, we *will* serve the Lord."

WICLIF.

INTERESTING VISIT TO THE GIPSIES.

My attention of late has been directed to the gipsies, who encamp about two miles from us. I have been to the wood, and find them very ignorant; that is to say, not more than one in twenty can read, out of all I have met with. I have been induced, from this circumstance, to attempt the establishment of a gipsy boarding-school for their female children. I have received two girls of the ages of fifteen and sixteen; neither of them could tell a letter, but they are teachable and obedient, and are getting on. I found the parents willing to leave them with me, upon my promising they shall be properly fed, decently clothed and lodged, taught to read, sew, knit stockings,

and plat coarse straw during the summer months. It was done as an act of faith upon the providence of God. I had no funds, but I have not been without encouragement since; and I am thankful I made the attempt. I visit the wood once a week, and when I can get a minster, have a sermon preached to them.

One little incident I met with which will be interesting to your Committee. One gipsy tent contained about ten in a family. I asked, "Can you read?" "No." "Your wife?" "No." "Any of the children?" "No." "Have you a Bible, or any other book?" "No." After a little conversation, the old man said, "Ma'am, I carries something very good about me, though I can't read it. I always carries it close to me, because I loves to have something good about me." I asked him to repeat what he had said, feeling a little curious to know what it could be; drawing a little nearer to the old man, he put his hand in his bosom, and took out a pocket-book, which he opened very carefully. I anxiously looked to see this precious something, which I fearfully anticipated was a kind of charm or incantation, when, to my great surprise, after unfolding several pieces of paper, he put into my hands a hand-bill of yours, "Art thou a sinner—a great sinner? does conscience fly in thy face, and tell thee so? then, 'I have a message from God unto thee.'" I can hardly tell you the feelings of pleasure that filled my mind—the opportunity was too valuable to be lost; and, seating myself on the baggage, while all the family were looking at the paper in my hand, I said, "I will read it to you, if you will listen;" this they did, with serious attention: and thus from your little hand-bill, which they had somewhere obtained, the Gospel was proclaimed to them; the way of misery and the way of mercy made known, and these poor wandering gipsies urged to flee from the wrath to come. I should have added, that he also had Part 3 of your DIVINE SONGS FOR COTTAGERS, folded up with the hand-bill, from which I read the hymn, "Come, ye sinners poor and wretched," which we sung under the shade of the trees, while the wood echoed back the sound, proclaiming, "Not the righteous, not the righteous—sinners Jesus came to call."

Here was an encampment of three families, about twenty souls, only one could read; and, in the absence of Bibles and all other books, and the living voice (for the Sabbath is to them as all other days), your little hand-bill was the only teacher, the only spiritual guide, to direct them to the Saviour.

In how many other instances similar destitution exists, yet remains to be known; but surely it is an argument for scattering with an unsparing hand these crumbs of the bread of life, to feed such as are ready to perish.

THE TRACT IN THE HEDGE.

JOHN STEVENS was the son of a poor, but pious widow, who felt anxious to bring up her child in the fear of God. She sent him to the Sunday-school, took him with her to the house of God, and, by the consistency of her own conduct, set him a pattern worthy of imitation.

On leaving his mother's roof, young Stevens associated with bad companions—he went on from bad to worse. In a few years Stevens married a young woman, more ignorant and as wicked as himself, with whom he lived in continual strife. The ale-house was more his home than his own dirty cottage, and he appeared to be rapidly carried down the stream, towards the vortex of eternal ruin.

In this state he went on, until one fine Sabbath morning he arose and dressed himself, with a determination to spend the day with some of his companions, a few miles from home. He set out in high spirits, expecting to partake of the pleasures of the convivial board with his associates in sin. When on the way, he saw something like a small parcel in the hedge, by the side of the road. Hoping he had found something valuable, he immediately took it, but on opening, finding it was a tract, he was about to throw it away. Curiosity, however, induced him to read it before he did so. On looking into it, the first sentence that caught his eye was "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." The subject of the tract was the evils attendant on Sabbath breaking. He did not like the topic, and thought he would not read it then, but would look it over at night, and afterwards destroy it; for that purpose he put it in his pocket, and pursued his journey.

As he walked along, he again thought it would amuse him to read the tract—he drew it from his pocket, and, as he read, his conscience became alarmed; he stopt, then read again, and trembled—his sinful course was there described, and its end exposed to his mental vision. He felt as a condemned criminal, and expected Divine justice would speedily execute the sentence he deserved. He remembered the religious advantages

he had possessed in his youth, and thought that a tenfold condemnation awaited him, because of his abuse of them.

In this state of mind Stevens wandered on, not caring whither he went, until he observed a place of worship open, and many persons pressing towards it. He followed them, entered the place, and sat down in a corner, where he thought he should escape observation. But the eye of Omniscience was upon him, and the hand of mercy was stretched out to snatch him, as a brand, from the burning.

He retired from the house of God, not to join his companions, as he had intended, but in secret, to endeavour to pour out his heart before that Being against whom he had sinned. Again he read the tract, and wept and prayed, and then returned home, to look for his long neglected Bible; hoping that he should in that find direction and encouragement.

The effects of this change were soon visible. Stevens became a new man. His early acquaintance with the Scriptures was now of incalculable advantage to him. The Spirit of God acted as a remembrancer, and brought again to his mind those truths which his excellent mother had taught him when a child; and he daily studied the sacred volume, that he might learn the ways of God more perfectly.

Stevens having become a *real* Christian, not a notional one, felt very anxious to give his wife all the instruction in his power. He deeply regretted that he had often led her into sin, and was now as desirous to see her walking with him in the way of holiness; whilst she, finding that his religion had made him a better man, and a better husband, quietly conformed to his wishes, and soon became a regular attendant with him on public worship.

About this period a school was established for the benefit of adult persons, who had not been taught to read when young. To this school the wife of Stevens constantly went; and although when she entered it she scarcely knew the alphabet, yet, in a few months, she was able to read several chapters in the New Testament, which, soon as she knew, she collected around her as many of her neighbours as would listen to her, while she read to them, and in that way excited desires in several to learn to read the Scriptures; so that, in a short time, more than fifty of both sexes attended to receive instruction. Stevens, himself, laboured industriously and efficiently both in the Sunday and adult schools. He had himself been indebted to a benevolent clergyman for early instruction, in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and he wished to impart all the know-

ledge he possessed to the ignorant poor around him; but no employment gave him so much pleasure as the distribution of those little messengers of mercy, one of which had been so instrumental to his happiness.

With the alteration in his habits the circumstances of Stevens greatly improved; his employer, to encourage his perseverance in well-doing, increased his salary; and, in a few years, gave him a situation of great trust, in which he conducted himself so well, that, at his death, which took place about ten years after the happy change in his character, his master attended his funeral, and paid as much respect to his memory as if he had lost a relative.

The heart of his aged parent, who survived him, was also made to rejoice, in seeing him walking in the truth, and she often, with tears of gratitude, exclaimed, "This, my son, was dead, and is alive again: he was lost, and is found."

THEOLOGICAL SPECULATIONS,

BY THE LATE DR. JAMES GRAY, OF BALTIMORE, AMERICA.

"I do not exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me."—Ps. cxxxi. 2.

> "In pride, in reasoning pride, our error lies;
> All quit the earth, and rush into the skies."—POPE.

IT will not be denied that the human mind often aspires after high attainments in the knowledge of heavenly mysteries; and its flights might be quoted as a proof of the native dignity of our reason, were there not cause to believe that they are as frequently prompted by pride, as by the desire of acquiring useful information. We neglect that which we might know, in pursuit of what cannot be understood; useful subjects are abandoned for those which are merely curious; we run the risk of fatal errors, in inquiries where we are not sure that truth is to be found; while rashness, caprice, and imprudence are visible in most of our intellectual engagements. We exercise ourselves in great matters and in things too high for us, while we neglect the most important concerns of life; we quit the earth, the natural scene of our operations, and rush into the skies, hoping to become gods in the knowledge of good and evil.

The grand cynosure and lode-star of all speculations on religion and morals is our practical duty to God and man.

Whatever notions affect not the practice of piety and virtue, increasing the love of them, and confirming their habits, are nothing more than the high-flown follies of a giddy and erratic imagination; and effect nothing but the alienation of the mind from useful pursuits and purposes. What would we think of the man who should spend years speculating on the necessary existence, ubiquity, and immensity of God, and yet should never worship him as the author of every good and perfect gift? What would we think of him who should waste life in inquiries respecting the character of the Son of God, and never seek after his salvation? or of the man who talks long and loud about the nature and duration of future punishment, and yet makes no effort to flee from the wrath which is to come? What could we say, but that all such persons are simple ones who know not the use for which their understandings were given them? The plain, simple, practical Christian is the true sage. There is a totality in his mind and in his religion. His understanding, his conscience, his feelings, his operative volitions, all go together, and move in harmony, like the wheels of a well regulated clock. Nothing is quiescent, nothing is inoperative. He serves God with his spirit and with his whole man.

Men may study religion with different views, as they have studied the natural sciences. Many ancient nations studied astronomy for the purpose of discovering the decrees of Omniscience, and of predicting the revolutions of states, and the fortunes of individual men. Modern philosophers study the same science, in order that by ascertaining the laws of nature in the heavens, they may regulate the intercourse of nations by land and water upon earth. It is practical effect alone which can determine the value of our intellectual pursuits. Of all studies true religion is the most practical, proposing this as its immediate end, to elevate man towards the image of God, and to render him like God, the benefactor of the human race, and the blessing of the world. This is the exposition which Paul gives of it, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord," 2 Cor. iii. 18.

A general mistake seems to prevail among some, namely, that there are certain sublime doctrines in the Christian Religion which the unlearned cannot reach, but which they must accept at second-hand from their more learned instructors. This mistake is radical, for it springs from a total ignorance of the nature of the Christian Dispensation; which is not a moral

theory, or a system of refined speculation, with an accompaniment of inferences; but a narrative of facts, to be believed by faith, all of them connected essentially with our duty and comfort, and future hopes. There is no doctrine of faith taught us in the Scriptures, or, in other words, there is no fact asserted there, which has not a direct and immediate practical tendency. And hence we may lay it down as a maxim, that as every Scriptural doctrine promotes true holiness, so that which doth not promote holiness is not Scriptural doctrine. Alas! those speculations, which many consider as sublime doctrines, resemble those lofty mountains which lift their heads above the clouds, and whose summits are crowned with eternal snows and eternal sterility. Like the pinnacle of the temple, where Satan placed our Lord, those virtiginous summits of speculation are places only of temptation and danger, to which the same conductor guides us with no good design.

It is in the humble valley that all teems with life and joy; the meadows are green, the fields are yellow with harvests, the clusters swell on the tendrils of the vine. The humble Christian who, like Enoch, walks with God, will always enjoy the clearest views of evangelical doctrines; for, as doctrines lead to practice, so practice sheds a light and a glory around those doctrines, which make them appear not only more important, but more luminous, also, than at first. When a young mathematician demonstrates his propositions from diagrams upon paper, he is assured of their abstract truth; but when he comes to the use of his instruments, and finds he can measure inaccessible heights and distances, or can determine when the moon, or any other planet or star, will come to the meridian, he is enraptured at the success of his experiments; and not only does a new pleasure take possession of him, but there is a new light poured around mathematical truths; and ever after, he contemplates those truths not in the abstractions of geometry, but in the harmonies of nature. To such a man every mathematical truth brings up to the eye of the imagination some picture of its practical application. And this circumstance imparts new charms to his favourite studies.

It is so in respect to Christian doctrines. The living Christian learns to view them in a practical light; while to the speculatist they continue thin and barren speculations. Let us produce some instances. The doctrine of the Trinity, as an abstract speculation, is confessedly mysterious. The practical Christian finds no difficulty, but ineffable satisfaction in contemplating the Scripture doctrine on that subject. The

Almighty God is his Father in heaven, possessed of all possible perfection—whom he adores; the eternal Son of God, the omniscient and omnipotent Creator of the world, is his brother and Redeemer, in whom he trusts for salvation; whom he loves, obeys, and adores; whom he views as his judge and his everlasting portion: the Holy Spirit is the source of his spiritual life, light, and joy; without whom he can do nothing, but with whose assistance he perfects holiness in the fear of the Lord.

How many objections against the duty and utility of prayer have speculative men produced?—abstract objections which do not admit of an easy abstract answer. But the man of prayer is unconscious that this duty labours under any speculative objections. In the midst of difficulties, wants, and dangers, he prays to God for any thing and every thing he needs. He knows his heavenly Father is able, and he believes him to be willing, to grant all necessary blessings to those who ask him for them.

Many things have been said against the utility of Christian Baptism, and many who have admitted its necessity, have speculated unprofitably about its particular efficacy. The practical Christian says, he who washed us from our sins in his own blood, has commanded us to commemorate that mercy, and make the commencement of a new and holy life by the ordinance of baptism; obedience to his command will be pleasing to him, and he will grant us the appropriate blessing.

In relation to the Lord's Supper, a similar train of observations might be brought forward. What strange speculations, theories, and dogmas have been broached and supported respecting the nature and efficacy of this ordinance. What unintelligible and incredible things have councils decreed and theologians defended! Yet to the simple Christian what duty is more obvious than that of celebrating the death of Jesus Christ in the ordinance of the Eucharist. "This do in remembrance of me." And is it possible that the Christian should ever forget the Lord that bought him? Is it possible that he should neglect an ordinance not merely easy of observance, but pleasant in its nature, full of emblematic instruction, and which calls into operation all the social feelings and charities of our nature.

In a word, Christianity is a rule to regulate the conduct of our rational race; but instead of humble and prompt obedience, which is our duty, our sturdy independence questions the reason of the law, and has a thousand difficulties to propose to the supreme God for solution before it will condescend to obey him.

Most of our religious speculations would be ridiculous, if they were not impious. God calleth thee, O man, to obedience, prompt, instantaneous obedience. Linger not a moment lest his anger kindle, and thou be cut down. Imitate the Psalmist, —"I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments." Thou mayest be ignorant of the moral grounds and reasons of the divine precept; but the precept itself thou canst not mistake, and its obligation thou canst not question. Obey the commandment of thy heavenly Father with the humility of a little child, and thy Father will love thee, and open thine eyes to discern wonderful things in his law. No wonder that many are so ignorant of Christianity; how can they understand it who do not practice it?

A man may spend half a century speculating on Christianity, yet without obedience he shall know nothing about it. God does not continue to pour the illumination of his Spirit upon disobedient hearts. They know too much of religion already, far too much, for their future comfort, who know more than they obey. One talent is enough to be tied up in a napkin and buried in the earth. How shall even that one talent be reckoned for?

Whatever God discovers to thee as a duty, perform instantaneously; and then God will show thee another duty, which perform in like manner; and another, and another, as thou goest on to perfection. Then thy path will be that of the just, "shining more and more towards the perfect day." When every illumination of the Spirit is productive of a practical grace or virtue, then every practical virtue will be succeeded by fresh illumination. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall possess more abundantly."

If any of my readers should be using great industry to understand the genius, nature, use, and ends of that divine and wondrous system of grace which we call the Gospel; determining within himself that so soon as he shall have acquired a satisfactory understanding of the whole system, he will take upon him the yoke of Christ, and walk in all the ordinances of God blamelessly; but that in the meantime he will forbear professing himself a Christian, and suspend the performance of every religious duty, till he shall be prepared to undertake the whole;—to that man I would say, you never will obtain the satisfaction you are in quest of by the course of conduct which you are pursuing. Let me tell you what lies before you in the path you are travelling. New inquiries multiplying every day, increasing doubts, dejection of spirit, dismay, despair, and prob-

ably ultimate scepticism and infidelity. You are always inquiring, but you find nothing; and by-and-by all will become unfixed, a perfect jumble and chaos of inextricable difficulties. Stop, traveller, you are in a wrong road; allow yourself to be put right.

The youngest of our readers must be convinced in their consciences of some Christian duty and obligation. Without pursuing speculation a moment longer, perform that duty, and persevere in the practice, and establish a habit: this will be one point fixed: you will have commenced the practical study of the Christian religion; and thus proceed, discharging every duty as soon as you are convinced of its obligation; and in no long time you will find yourself completely in the Christian ranks. But know that in the study of the Christian religion the heart must go with the head, and the practice with both. The man who does not practise Christianity is really consummately ignorant of it. I mean to say unequivocally, that his eyes are blind to the evidence and glory of that religion. There is an unmerited compliment (I am convinced it is an unmerited compliment) frequently paid to mere speculatists in religion: it is said that they have clear conceptions of Christian doctrine, and can discourse wisely and learnedly respecting them. This is decidedly a mistake. Such men neither conceive distinctly, nor express themselves justly, on any religious subject whatever. And all the learning and eloquence in the world cannot supply the defect which arises from the want of Christian practice.

This may appear to wear the face of confident assertion. Let me illustrate the present decision in respect to religion, by referring to an analogous instance in a branch of natural knowledge. Suppose a man to have acquired a knowledge of some natural scenery, the falls of Niagara for instance, by maps and geographical descriptions, and that another person had visited the spot and examined every thing with his own eyes; and suppose each of these were called to give a description of that great natural curiosity. You would at once discover the man who was personally familiar with the scene. The minuteness and particularity of his description, his original views, not to be found in any book, the vivacity of his manner, the enthusiasm of his feelings, the promptitude with which he would answer any inquiries which might be put to him, would at once prove that he was no second-hand reporter. The man of books, on the contrary, would deal in cold generalities, about a huge rock and a large river, in such a longitude and such a latitude; but if you ask a single question, it is a thousand to one

that he can give you no answer. The latter is the type of the mere reader of religion, the former of the practical Christian.

It cannot be an unsuitable conclusion of this essay to remark, that those who engage in the professional study of the Christian religion, for the purpose of unveiling and inculcating its mysteries and duties, can never succeed in their undertaking, unless they unite the conscientious discharge of all Christian duties and true piety of heart with their professional investigations. The world never has seen, nor will see, a good writer on the doctrines or duties of Christianity, who was not a pious practical Christian. I grant that we may find some great polemics notoriously destitute of the Christian spirit. The acuteness of their criticisms and the cogency of their logic may excite our admiration, and we may, if we please, panegyrise them as very useful men and ornaments of the church. Yet, without indulging a partial enthusiasm or verging towards mysticism, we do not hesitate to assert, that in every such instance the deficiency of practical experience is visible in their intellectual poverty. We frequently find them close alongside of some glorious truth, yet they see it not; and even when they are demonstrating an important truth, they turn it over as the cock in the fable turned over the diamond without being sensible of its value. A practical navigator, and a teacher of mathematical navigation who never saw the sea, would talk very differently on points of seamanship; yet not more differently than a mere speculative divine from a true practical Christian minister. If it were not invidious, it certainly would not be difficult to contrast the writings of some theologians, who to gigantic genius had added the stores of the profoundest scholarship and general knowledge, but without personal piety, with the writings of other theologians, their inferiors in every thing but practical experience; and yet the latter are as much superior to the former, as the experienced physician is to the boy who has just terminated his course of college lectures.

There are, no doubt, men who will smile at these ideas as the vagaries of an enthusiastic mind, even though they should not attribute them to intentional misrepresentation or hypocrisy. Cant they surely will call them. And yet, if they were to make a just use of their reason, they would own that all we have said is not cant, but true philosophy. It is true, there is something apparently assuming in this doctrine. And a man, conscious to himself of intellect and learning, may take it much amiss to be told, that in consequence of his practical neglect of Christian duties, he is really an incompetent judge of Christian doctrines.

"What!" he cries, "have not I as much sense as such a man with all his prayers, and sacraments, and psalm-singing? Why, Sir, I would not compare my understanding to his!" All this may, in many instances, be correct enough; yet we may thus attempt to quiet an offended friend. We may say to him, "It is very true that God has blessed you with far higher powers of mind, and a better education, than the man you allude to. You are an abler merchant, a more learned physician, a more eloquent lawyer, a more skilful artist. And in the line in which you have applied your talents to the practical purposes of life, you are vastly his superior. No man questions it. But then you have never put Christianity to the practical test. You have speculated a little on abstract notions about religion, without trying whether Christian doctrine, when reduced to practice, produces that peace of mind, that elevation of hope, those purifying influences, that sublime and heavenly temperament of soul, which are the acknowledged effects of that religion among those who practise it. You know you have not made this experiment, and you have every human evidence that your neighbour has made it. Why, then, should you think it wonderful, that he should have a juster conception of Christian doctrine, as well as a deeper impression of its importance, than you have? Be candid; and you will admit, that in all practical sciences, and Christianity is eminently such, practice is essentially necessary to give distinctness and precision to doctrine and theory."

We shall close this article with a few sententious observations. The theory of Christianity which does not produce practical consequences is never theoretically correct. Opinions which cannot be applied to practical purposes are no part of Christian doctrine: opinions which weaken the force of moral obligation, and render a man easy in the violation or neglect of his prescribed duty, must be erroneous. To indulge in speculations which have no practical tendency, is a criminal waste of time; to preach them is to abuse the pulpit and trifle with the souls of men; and to write them is an outrage on human nature and human society.

CONSOLATION.

THE following is an extract of a genuine letter, written by a youth now no more, to his mother, to console her on the death of his sister:—

DEAR MOTHER—This world has been called a valley of

tears. Poverty, disease, misfortune unkindness, inconstancy, *death*—all assail the travellers as they journey onward to eternity through this gloomy valley; and what is to comfort them but religion? Let us take care that we be not too much depressed under the dispensations of God, and cause him to be angry with us. What has happened now must happen with regard to us all sooner or later; we must all die, and in a very little time, the place that now knows us shall know us no more: therefore, it remaineth that those that weep be as though they wept not, they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away. Again I would say, what is to comfort us but religion? Religion comforts the mind with the assurance of an all-pervading Providence, so minute in its superintendence and control, that not a sparrow falls to the ground without the knowledge of our heavenly Father; a superintendence which is excluded from no point of space, no moment of time, and overlooks not the meanest creature in existence. Nor is this all, for the Word of God assures the believer that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose. Nothing that imagination could conceive, is more fully consolatory than this, to be assured that all things, however painful at the time, not excepting the failure of our favourite schemes, the disappointment of our fondest hopes, the loss of our dearest comforts, shall be over-ruled by infinite wisdom for the promotion of our ultimate good. This is a spring of comfort whose waters never fail. Religion consoles also by making manifest some of the benefits of affliction, even at the time it is endured. It crucifies the world, mortifies sin, quickens prayer, extracts the balmy sweets of the promises, endears the Saviour, and, to crown all, it directs the mind to that glorious state, where the days of our mourning shall be ended—where God shall wipe away every tear from our eyes. Nothing so composes the mind, and helps it to bear that load of trouble which God may lay upon it, as the near prospect of its termination. Religion shews the weather-beaten mariner the haven of eternal rest, where no storms arise, and the sea is ever calm. It exhibits to the weary traveller the city of habitation, within whose walls he will find a pleasant home, and friends who will welcome his arrival.

THE CARNAL AND SPIRITUAL.

"They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit: for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." —Rom. viii. 5, 6.

By the *flesh* here, we are to understand the sinful appetites and passions of our fallen nature. God is a spirit, whose name is Holy; our fleshly nature, therefore—our depraved state of heart, must be directly opposed to the nature and will of God. God created man in his own image; and, therefore, this fleshly nature must be the very opposite of that pure and spiritual nature, which man originally received from the hand of his Maker as the stamp and similitude of his own holiness. The first man, Adam, being the covenant head and representative of his posterity, in consequence of violating that holy law which was given him to be the rule of his duty and the pledge of his happiness, not only lost the favour, but the moral image of his Maker. He became a sinner. The Spirit of God withdrew from him. The evil spirit took possession. Not only did he become condemned, but depraved. Not only was he doomed to punishment, but his soul became the seat and the prey of evil propensities and passions. A corrupt bias, a propensity to sin, became the fatal characteristic of our moral nature.

Now, we know that it is a law, that like begets like. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." It is so in the nature of things, and cannot be otherwise. A good and spiritual nature, cannot propagate and transmit that which is fleshly and evil; neither can that which is fleshly and evil, propagate and transmit that which is spiritual and good. A good tree cannot produce evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. From a sinful stock, must a sinful progeny be propagated. Sinful Adam can be the father of a sinful race only. As mortal Adam can be the father only of a mortal posterity; so sinful Adam can be the father only of a sinful posterity. Accordingly, it is said that Adam, who was created in the likeness of God, after the fall begat a son in his own likeness, his own fallen and fleshly likeness. This fallen and fleshly nature we inherit. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. We bring it into the world with us. It is born with us. We are shapen in iniquity. We are born in sin. We inherit not only fallen Adam's bodily

nature, but fallen Adam's sinful nature. He was sentenced to death, and the body which we inherit from him, inherits death. His soul became sinful, and our souls are sinful in consequence of his sin. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? In Adam all die. By the disobedience of one, many were made sinners. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.

In consequence of this fleshly bias which we bring with us into the world, this "old man" of sin which we inherit from Adam, our whole moral nature is disordered. The various powers of the soul are tainted. The whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint. Our intellectual powers are impaired, our moral powers depraved. The soul is broken off from God; she seeks her happiness in the creature; and, in regard to her thoughts, pleasures and pursuits, "ungodliness" is the sad character of the whole. The affections are set on earthly and sensual things. The judgment gives false decisions. The will chooses the evil rather than the good. Passion usurps the seat of reason, as the charioteer of the soul; and the voice of conscience is choked by the importunities of appetite. The present and the perishable predominate over the future and the eternal: and the sensual and animal parts of our nature tyrannize over the rational and the spiritual. Thus the heart of man is evil; and "from within, out of the heart," says our Saviour, "proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these things come from within, and defile the man."

"The flesh" being understood to signify the depraved propensities of our nature, "*they that are after the flesh*" are those in whom sinful passions and propensities reign with commanding power. They are prompted and governed by a fleshly bias and fleshly appetites. They are *after* the flesh—after it in the inward movements of their minds and the outward movements of their conduct; after the flesh in their desires and pleasures; after it in their plans, and aims, and motives; after it in their hearts, and after it in their lives. They "live after the flesh;" they "walk" after the flesh. Hence the apostle adds, "They that are *after* the flesh, *do mind the things of the flesh.*"

Do mind the things of the flesh—in this way the fleshly nature manifests itself. The fleshly nature is first, and "minding the things of the flesh" is its genuine fruit; just as the tree, and not the fruit, is first; and the badness of the fruit is the

proof of the badness of the tree. They that are after the flesh, being fleshly in their affections, desires, and pleasures, do naturally mind the things of the flesh. "Flesh, flesh," is the motto which is stamped upon their thoughts, pursuits, and character. God, who is a Spirit, sees that they are fleshly. Angels, who wait to make high heaven ring with acclamations of joy over one penitent, see that they are fleshly. The Redeemer, who wept over Jerusalem, sees that they are fleshly. And by their works they show to grieving saints, and a world fleshly like themselves, that they are fleshly. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

Let us now consider the contrast. Contrasted with the *flesh* is the *spirit:* contrasted with those that are *after* the flesh are they that are *after* the Spirit: and contrasted with *minding* the things of the flesh is *minding* the things of the Spirit.

By the *Spirit* we are to understand the Holy Spirit of God, dwelling, reigning, and working in the hearts of the regenerate. Born in sin, we need to be born again. Without this we cannot please God; we can neither love, serve, nor enjoy him, nor are we fit for heaven. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Of this great spiritual change of soul, the Holy Spirit is the author. Hence this change is called the renewing of the Holy Ghost; and all who experience it are said to be born from above, born of God, born of the Spirit. Without the work of the Spirit there can be no regeneration; and, of consequence, no part with Christ, no share in his blessings or kingdom. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his." Every soul in which the Spirit takes up his abode, he sweeps and garnishes for himself. He comes down into it as a Spirit of life, and makes it free from the law of sin and death. He circumcises it from the corruptions of the world, and makes it a partaker of the divine nature. He transforms it into his own likeness. He stamps upon it the image of his own holiness. He infuses into it his own peace and blessedness; and changes it more and more into the same image from glory to glory.

As that which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. We say of one whose face resembles

that of his father, he fathers himself. In like manner, we may say of the renewed nature, it fathers itself. It *shows* that it is born of God. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God."

We easily see, therefore, who they are that are "after the Spirit." Like the Spirit, they are spiritual. Holy tempers, dispositions and desires, have been planted by the Spirit in their hearts. He lives in them, he dwells in them, he walks in them, he works in them, he reigns in them, he leads them, he guides and governs them. And what do they do? Do they not obey his heavenly influence? Do they not live in the Spirit and walk in the Spirit? Are they not led by the Spirit? As the tide obeys the moon's attraction, and swells and rises under its powerful but mysterious influence; as this earth and every other planet obey the sun's attraction, and are wheeled in their courses in obedience to the ceaseless operation of his power: in like manner, every soul throughout the church of God obeys that secret but almighty energy put forth upon them all by that Spirit, who works in them to will and to do of his good pleasure, and who is the author of all good throughout the moral universe. They are *after* the Spirit.

"*The things of the Spirit*," must all be spiritual things. They are such things as the Spirit produces; such things as he sanctions and commands: things suited to the taste, the desires, and pleasure of the renewed soul. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

How then do they that are after the Spirit shew that they are so? "*They mind* the things of the Spirit." The things of the Spirit, are the things which have their hearts. These are the things on which they employ their thoughts. They delight in these things. These things are their element. Here their affections are placed. Here they find their happiness. No wonder: "for to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Life is esteemed the greatest earthly good. Life capacitates for activity and for enjoyment. Death, on the other hand, is esteemed the greatest temporal evil. Death destroys all power of bodily activity, and separates for ever from every earthly enjoyment. Look at the dead man: he lies motionless and insensible before you. The voice of music he hears not. The sound of joy awakens no emotion in his bosom. He can no longer bear a part in the transactions of men. The living —the living, they only can do the works and feel the delights

of life. Life and death are therefore terms employed in relation to spiritual things, to shew us that the spiritual mind, alone, is capacited to perform the functions, and feel the happiness of the spiritual life; but that to be carnally minded is death, because this carnality of mind is the destruction of all spiritual activity and delight.

"To be spiritually minded is *life.*" Gifted with life from the Spirit of God, the spiritual man is capacited for the activities of the spiritual life. While sin lived and reigned in him he was dead to those spiritual employments to which he is now gladly and gloriously alive. Endowed with spiritual understanding, he appreciates the value of those truths and blessings revealed in the Gospel. Endowed with spiritual sensibility, he feels his wants, and hungers and thirsts after spiritual blessings. He is deeply careful about the health of his soul. He addresses himself to a conscientious discharge of duty. He combats the remains of corruption within him. He pants after God, holiness, and heaven. Thus they that are spiritual show themselves the sons of God; "and because they are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

"To be carnally minded," on the contrary, "is death." The power of spiritual death has settled down on those who are after the flesh, and mind the things of the flesh. Their minds are choked with errors and prejudices. Their hearts are set on earthly gains and sensual pleasures. Their affections rise not to Him who is the author of their being, and the source of blessedness. They have no heart nor mind, no power nor pleasure, no will nor way, to keep the commandments of God. They do not love him. They like not to retain him in their knowledge. "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." In this condition, there is a moral inability in those who are after the flesh to love or obey God. "They cannot cease from sin." "They cannot deliver their souls." They are insensible to their spiritual wants, and to their eternal interests. They are unaffected with the misery of their present condition. They regard not the eternal misery to which they are madly rushing. With regard to the activities of the spiritual life, they are dead, miserably dead; but with regard to the activities of fleshliness and sin, they are alive, awfully and fatally alive. Sin reigns in their mortal bodies. They are under the power of Satan, and it is not the Spirit of God, but the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of dis-

obedience, who leads them captive at his will. Such is spiritual death—a fixed habit of soul: the death of all spiritual activity —a state which the energy of the Spirit of God only can break up, calling forth the soul out of it to the resurrection of life.

To be spiritually minded is not only life, but "*peace.*" It is said to be life and *peace*, because, in consequence of being capacited by the Spirit of life, for the activities of the spiritual life, the soul enters on the enjoyments and pleasures of the spiritual life. To live is to enjoy. United to Christ and made alive to God, light and peace take possession of the dark and desolate bosom, and joy and gladness are diffused over the heart. These are, it is true, the pleasures of sin; but these are pleasures in which there is no "peace." A thousand disgusts, disappointments, vexations, alarms, and guilty forebodings are perpetually breaking in on the pleasures of sin, and miserable pleasures are they all. But to be spiritually minded is life and peace. A sense of God's favour, a hope in his pardoning mercy, a constant reference to the atoning blood of Christ, a prevailing desire to please God, a heart fixed on heaven, and an habitual fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—these fill the soul with, a "*peace*" proportioned to the degree of its spirituality. Here is true happiness. This is real enjoyment. This is pleasure. It is indeed *life*. This life is the highest style of man, and he only who enjoys it, can be truly said to live.

They that are after the flesh, are incapable of this life and peace. "To be carnally minded is death"—the death of enjoyment, the death of peace, the death of happiness. They who mind the things of the flesh, have no heart, no taste, no relish, no capacity for spiritual enjoyments. They are strangers to the love of God. They delight not in his law. They feel no pleasure in the employments of religion. They seek their happiness in the world and in the flesh. Can these yield happiness? What is the experience of all who make the desperate experiment? They feel the truth of the declaration of God, "There is no peace to the wicked." "What profit had ye in these things, whereof ye are now ashamed, for the end of these things is death?"

To be carnally minded is not only *death* now, but *death eternally*. Not the destruction of being; this would be preferable; but the destruction of happiness. It is so in the nature of things, and it is so by the appointment of God. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God," and he has determined and declared that the wages of sin is death. "If

ye live after the flesh ye shall die:" to be carnally minded is death." This is God's decree; and must be so in the very nature of things. They who live after the flesh are unfit for heaven. Were they admitted into heaven they would find no congenial society, no pursuits, no enjoyments there suited to their tastes or habits. Hell, therefore, is their *own* place. There is their master, there their companions, and there the wages of their wickedness. "They are vessels of wrath *fitted* for destruction"—fitted by their sins and by their impenitence. The death of happiness which the wicked experience here, is a warning and foretaste of that complete and everlasting death of happiness which they must endure in the future world. As there is a foretaste of bliss, so there is a foretaste of wrath. In the remorse of conscience, and fearful anticipations of future punishment, which the wicked often experience even in this world, hell is already kindled within their bosoms, and they are tormented before the time.

Not until they leave this world, is either the wickedness or the misery of sinners completed. Death puts the last stamp and finish upon the moral character. As there is no man in this life so spiritual as to be without imperfection, so there is no man so fleshly as to have nothing good. They that are after the flesh, have nothing, in the proper sense, spiritual about them; but still they may have many good points. They may have amiable tempers; they may be generous in their bounty; they may be friends to civil liberty; they may have their convictions, wishes, and resolves; they may reform, do many things, put on an appearance of religion, and be useful in many respects. At death, however, they leave all their good, and carry with them all their evil. Their depravity, as well as their guilt, passes with them into eternity, receives a dreadful immortality, and kindles, independent of any outward punishment, an everlasting hell in their bosoms. At death, too, the misery, as well as the wickedness of sinners, is complete. Just as the happiness of the righteous in heaven shall be perfectly free from all the cares, pains, griefs, and sorrows of this life, in like manner, the misery of the wicked in hell shall receive no mitigation from the ease or pleasures of this world. Here, none are so miserable or so wicked as to have no means of procuring some relaxation of wretchedness. They can have recourse to the pleasures of sin. They can drown their cares in drunkenness. They can seek forgetfulness in sleep. But in hell there is no sleep; no drunkard's drink; no mirth, no music, no song, no dance, no joyous companions, no merry

laugh, not a drop of water to cool the tongue; nothing but the burnings of unquenchable fire; nothing but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth for ever and for ever.

To be spiritually minded, on the other hand, is not only *life and peace* in this world, but it issues in the complete and everlasting *life and peace of heaven.* The life and peace of the spiritual in this world, is never absolutely perfect, and often interrupted. This results from the imperfection of their sanctification. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." Paul, under experience of this conflict, thus speaks, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. The good that I would, I do not; but the evil that I would not, that do I. I see a law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and leading me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" At death all imperfection is at an end. Sanctification being complete, peace is complete also. The soul enters on the boundless blessedness of heaven—a blessedness without alloy, without interruption, and without end.

As the carnal mind naturally tends to everlasting death, so the spiritual mind, in the nature of things, and by the constitution of God, tends to everlasting life. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap: if ye sow to the flesh, ye shall of the flesh reap corruption, but if ye sow to the Spirit, ye shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." As there is a fitting for destruction, so there is a preparation for glory. As living after the flesh leads the soul from one stage of wickedness to another down to hell, so by living after the Spirit, we are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

As the carnal have in this world their warnings and foretastes of everlasting death, in like manner, the spiritual have their foretastes and pledges here below of the everlasting life and peace of heaven. The Spirit "is in them as a well of water springing up into everlasting life." They have the seal of the Spirit, and the earnest of the Spirit. The Spirit witnesses with their spirit that they are the children of God. In a sense of the divine love, in a hope full of immortality, and a peace that passes all understanding, they feel elevated above the world, they can glory in tribulation, they can rejoice in the midst of affliction; they are raised alike above the love of life

and the fear of death; they desire to depart and to be with Christ,

> "And all their prospects brightening to the last,
> Their heaven commences ere the world be past."
>
> LUTHER.

THE LATE DR. M'CRIE.

DR. M'CRIE, of Edinburgh, died on the 5th of August, after a short illness, in the 64th year of his age and 40th of his ministry. He was born at Dunse, Berwickshire, in the year 1772. He was accustomed to relate that, on his first leaving his home, his mother accompanied him part of the way, and on parting took him off the road, and kneeling down with him by the hedge side, committed him in prayer to God. Doctor M'Crie was the most distinguished writer of the present age, on the subject of ecclesiastical biography. His life of Knox is a standard historical work. It is difficult to say whether this production reflects more credit on the memory of Knox or his biographer. Certain it is, that the character of Knox was vindicated from a host of most unmerited reproaches, and the name of M'Crie was elevated on the pedestal of fame. To the Life of Knox succeeded that of Melville. This work as well as the former, should be carefully perused by every one who wishes thoroughly to imbue his spirit with an admiration and a zeal for reformation principles. His histories of the suppression of the Reformation in Spain and in Italy, are also worthy of the author's reputation. His "Review of the Tales of my Landlord," is a successful vindication of the character of our reforming and covenanting ancestors from aspersions with which it was attempted to dishonour their memory. When called from this earthly scene, he was engaged on a life of Calvin —a noble theme, which the author of the Life of Knox was pronounced, by the unanimous voice of the lovers of Calvin's memory, worthy to take up; and to which he was amply qualified to do justice. Like all great men, Dr. M'Crie was a man of modest and unassuming manners. He was a stranger to every thing like pomposity and arrogance; and was universally admired for his learning, simplicity and piety.

Dr. M'Crie belonged to the original Antiburgher Synod. He became disconnected from the General Associate Anti-

burgher Synod in the year 1804, on occasion of the controversy then agitated in that Body respecting the Magistrate's power in matters of religion. After the union between the Burghers and Antiburghers of Scotland, which took place in 1820, he and his party were joined, in 1827, by the Protesters, who, to the number of twelve, did not accede to that union.

For many years Dr. M'Crie was one of the conductors of the "Christian Magazine," a periodical of much ability, formerly published in Edinburgh. In this work several valuable biographical and theological articles are from his pen.

As a preacher, he was much admired for the sound theology and rich materials with which his sermons abounded. He particularly excelled in exposition. As a preacher, as a pastor, as a companion and as a friend, no one could be more venerated and beloved than Dr. M'Crie was by his people.

The Presbyterian Secession Church in Ireland has happily kept aloof from those controversies by which the Secession in Scotland has been distracted. She set the Burghers and Antiburghers of Scotland an example of union, and she would rejoice to see that union universal. The Presbyterian Secession Church in Ireland recognises as her accredited standards, the Westminster Confession of Faith and the original Secession Testimony. In the spread of orthodox principles throughout the world we take a cordial interest. That the Spirit of God may, in his good time, draw together the different sections of the Presbyterian Church, is our earnest prayer. And such men as Dr. M'Crie we are ever prepared to honour.

THOUGHTS ON A PROPOSITION TO UNITE THE CHURCHES OF ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND.

(*To the Editors of the Christian Freeman.*)

In one of the late numbers of the *Christian Journal*, the organ of the *evangelical and missionary portion* of the clergy of the Establishment, an article appeared, containing a proposal to unite the Churches of England and Scotland. The author of it states that he is a curate in the Establishment; his piety, talents and liberality should procure for him, from the religious public, a calm consideration of the subject which he proposes. I waited for some time, in the expectation that some member of the Church of Scotland would take up the matter; but finding it likely to pass unnoticed, I beg, through your *Periodical*, to hold it up to the attention of the religious public, with the

hope of inducing the calm and useful discussion of a topic of vital importance.

I would admonish the reader not to treat the proposition with scorn, nor regard it as ridiculous and impracticable. Unions have been effected in more unpropitious times, and under very discouraging circumstances.

Opposition to this measure may be expected from all who, because they live on *corruption*, love it and labour for its perpetuation; opposition may be expected from the drones, the place-holders, the do-nothings, the lovers of rank, of ease, of forms—from the fox-hunters, the topers, and all that unholy brood who look upon *the Church* as a source of support for their lazy pampered bodies. It must be expected that *they* would oppose any union that might concentrate the wisdom and energy of both Churches, and lead to the adoption of a discipline by which the den of thieves might be cast out of the temple—opposition from such should be looked upon as a token for good.

I am aware, that opposition to the contemplated union will be found in the *offices* of the Establishment; *this*, at present, is far from being *formidable*. The dissenters have no love for those arrogant offices of Papal origin, they relish not a vainly assumed priesthood, they despise the Papal mimickry of deans, archdeacons, archbishops, primates, with all that *incumbent* herd that fatten in stalls; they regard the metropolitans, and all satellites that minister to their pride and pomp, as "lords over God's heritage," and not examples to the flock. The abolition of ten of the *Prelatic* bench, and the rumoured measures of further *Church change*, shew that the King, Lords and Commons, are nearly of the same way of thinking; they are about to cast these *offices* aside, as broken tools of the state, and hence, opposition from the high officers of the Establishment would be not only vain on their part, but likely to ensure additional unpopularity. They have outlived the sympathies of their friends, and their offices must perish with the present generation, or be adapted to the popular taste. They have enough to do in these tempestuous times to keep the remaining mitres from being shaken off their heads, without exciting a more general disgust, by opposing any measure likely to be useful to the religious portion of their own clergy and laity.

It is thought, by others, that the liturgy of the Establishment would present an insurmountable barrier to the union of both Churches. I differ from them. I know that the book of Common Prayer is any thing but popular amongst many of the

members of the Established Church. The clergymen of the "Home Mission" seldom or never use it in their missionary services, they do not even adopt the psalmody contained in it—that psalmody, whose fine poetry and *flowing* numbers are so vauntingly preferred by some, to the faithful version of the Scottish Church. James the First, designated the Episcopal Liturgy "an ill said mass." Some find in it much of the relics of Popery, and object to the fast days and saints' days drawn from the Popish mass book. Many object to the forms, and to the repetition of creeds during public worship: some contend for the expediency of these matters: many affirm that the baptismal service, the absolution of the sick, the ordaining of priests, and the churching of women, are so many parts of Popery without any modification. The service book still continues an unsatisfactory compilation, notwithstanding all its *revisions* and Parliamentary sanctions; and cannot therefore be expected to throw any real impediment in the way of the union; they who say "it is dry, monotonous, Popish, cumbrous or ambiguous," will be easily induced to cast it away altogether, and experience from the past will not allow them to accept of a liturgy composed by the present heads of the church, and ratified by the present Parliament.

Another hindrance is thought to exist in the discordant practices of both Churches. But there has latterly been a rapid approximation to Presbyterianism in the evangelical portion of the Established Church; some of the ministers remonstrate with the prelates; the want of purity of communion has been deeply and generally felt, and in some cases a change has been attempted. The bounds fixed, by Papal authority, to ministerial exertion, have been trampled on; and religious services are not now confined to parochial bounds or consecrated walls. In the letter which gave rise to these thoughts, the authority of the ordaining lordly Prelate, is lowered down to that of a Presbyterian Moderator! The most devoted ministers wish to have their congregations no longer composed of speckled birds—of men of every, and of *no* religious creed; they feel it to be an intolerable grievance that they are compelled to administer the Lord's Supper indiscriminately to all. They, and every intelligent layman, look upon sponsors as a Popish farce, and think their hands polluted with the holy water which is said to have the mystical power of washing away sin; these are not mere one-sided testimonies; intercourse with every enlightened member of the Establishment will more than confirm such statements. The zealous ministers of the "Episcopal Church Home Mission" have adopted the form and manner of Presbyterian simplicity, and

cast aside, during their missionary excursions, the objectionable parade of Episcopal ceremonies.

To be concluded in our next. O. J.

SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

LET us recur to the words of our Lord's prediction—instructive words, upon which we never can too deeply meditate. He *must* go—he *must* suffer—he *must* be killed. Whence, and what was this necessity? Assuredly no *absolute* necessity originally seated in the nature of the thing that the Son of God should suffer; he *might* have left the miserable race of man to perish in their sins. The Son is in all things, but in nothing more than in love and mercy, the express image of the Father. Notwithstanding all that man could plead in extenuation of his transgression (and somewhat he *had* to plead—the frailty of his nature—the subtlety of the tempter), yet the purposes of God's moral government rendered it unfit to pardon sin without intercession and atonement. Compassion instigates the Son of God to pay the forfeit of our crimes, and to satisfy, in his own person, the Eternal Father's justice. Impelled by *this* necessity, incited by commiseration of our fallen state, he lays aside the glory "which he had with the Father before the world began." In the virgin's womb he clothes himself with flesh; and, together with that mortal clothing, he assumes man's perfect nature—a nature subject to our wants and to our pains, not insensible to our enjoyments, susceptible, as appeared in may actions of his life, of our social attachments, and though pure from the stain of sin, not exempt from the feeling of temptation. When his hour draws near, this human nature shrinks under the apprehension of pain—he foresees the accumulated horror of his approaching sufferings—he foresees it with distress and agony. Where is the wise disputer of the world, who says that pain and affliction are not evils?—who, sufficient to himself, indifferent to things external, boasts that he would be unmoved in calamity, at ease in torment? Bring him to Gethsemane: there shall he see a just man and perfect—a man whose conscience reproaches him with no vice or folly—a man whose life hath been piety and love, unaffected piety, disinterested love—a man in whose ample mind are hidden all the treasures of knowledge—a man assuredly entitled to every comfort which the consciousness of perfection, of perfect virtue and of perfect wisdom, can bestow—he shall see this wise,

this good, this perfect man, this man in union with Divinity, overwhelmed with grief and tribulation. "Sure he bears our griefs, he carries our sorrows, he undergoes the chastisement of our peace." See his mortified looks, his troubled gestures! See the bloody sweat! strange symptom of the unuttered pangs that rend his righteous heart. See him prostrate on the earth in anxious supplication. Humble thyself, O vain philosophy! dismiss thy arrogant maxims: learn from this affecting spectacle a better wisdom than thine own—learn it of him who brought it from above. Say not that affliction is not an evil: say that it is to be born with humility, as the punishment of sin—to be endured with fortitude, as the instrument of good—to be accepted with thankfulness, as the discipline of God, whereby he trains his sons to virtue, and fits the virtuous for glory; but confess that it is that which the most perfect natures do the most abhor—that which it is the wisdom of man, with due submission to the dispensations of Providence, to shun.

Our Saviour, in the anguish of his soul, but with perfect resignation to the Father's will, prays that, if possible, the cup of bitterness may pass by him. The counsels of God are founded on unerring wisdom; they cannot be reversed or changed. The awful sentence is gone forth, "Without blood there is no remission!" "Awake, O sword! against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts." Love to man, joined with a zeal for the honour and support of the Father's government—these motives which first engaged him in the painful work of our redemption, prevail over his human feelings; and farther fortified by a vision from heaven, he determines to meet the malice of his enemies; and when the officers of the Sanhedrim appear with Judas at head, he summons not those legions of angels which were ever in readiness to attend his call—he puts not forth the powers that resided in him—he commands his attendants to sheath the swords already drawn in his defence—he repairs the violence that one of them already had committed—and after such rebuke to the traitor, and such expostulations with the officers, as might show them that he knew every particular of the conspiracy, and was aware of all that was intended, he surrenders himself without resistance, thus verifying the ancient prediction, "He was led like a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before the shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

The chief priests and elders were unwilling to put him to death by their own authority, lest they should incur the charge

of tumult and sedition; for Judea being at this time a Roman province, death could not regularly be inflicted without the permission, at least, of the Roman governor, and they were desirous of putting the face of public justice upon the whole of the transaction. Cool and crafty in their malice, they present him before Pilate, and, urging the complicated charge of blasphemy and sedition, insist upon his death. Pilate well understood that both these accusations were groundless; but he was very unpopular in his province, which he is said to have ruled with a rod of iron. He was given to understand, that if he stood forth as the friend of Jesus, he would himself incur the accusation of traitorous designs. He took the alarm at this. He saw that complaints might be carried to Rome: he well knew the jealous temper of the Emperor Tiberius, ever ready to listen to complaints against his provincial governors—cruel and implacable in his resentments: he thought the present opportunity was not to be missed of doing the Jews a pleasure, by throwing away the life, as he conceived, of an inconsiderable, friendless man, who, when once he was gone, would never be inquired after. And from these motives of selfish cunning and guilty fear, Pilate, against the remonstrances of his conscience, and the warnings of heaven, consented to our Saviour's death.

The execution of the Roman governor's sentence fell in course upon the Roman soldiers, and this insured that particular kind of death which our Lord had himself predicted; for crucifixion was not the punishment which the Jewish law appointed for the crimes wherewith Jesus was charged, but it was one which the Romans inflicted upon offenders of the meanest condition, or those who had been guilty of the most atrocious and flagitious crimes. The living body of the sufferer was fastened to two cross pieces of wood, by nails driven through the hands and feet; the feet being nailed to the upright post, and the hands to the two extremities of the transverse beam. In this situation, the miserable objects of this barbarous punishment were left to consume in lingering and dreadful torments: for as none of the parts essential to life was immediately injured, none of the vital actions immediately impeded, and none of the larger blood vessels set open, the death was necessarily slow; and the multitude of nerves that terminate in the hands and feet, giving those parts the nicest sensibility, rendered the sufferings exquisite.

Such was the death to which the unrelenting malice of his enemies consigned the meek and holy Jesus. I must not

farther pursue the detail of those minute occurrences, in which, though brought about by natural and common causes, the ancient prophecies concerning the circumstances of our Saviour's passion were remarkably fulfilled. It was not till every tittle was fulfilled, that the patient Son of God, as if then and not before at liberty to depart, said, "It is finished!" bowed his anointed head, and rendered up the ghost. Wonderful catastrophe! replete with mysteries; among which the harmony of Divine Providence and human liberty is not the least. Mechanical causes, governed by a single intellect, could not with more certainty have wrought the predetermined effect: independent beings could not have pursued with greater liberty, than the persons concerned in this horrid transaction, each his separate design. "*It is finished!*" Holy victim! thy sufferings are finished! *All* is finished, that wicked men were wonderfully destined to contribute toward the general deliverance! What remains, infinite power and infinite mercy shall accomplish. The disciples, those few of them who had the courage to be present at this dismal scene, hang their heads in sorrowful despondency, and seem to have abandoned the hope that *this* was he who should redeem Israel. But Israel *is* redeemed. The high sacrifice, appointed before the foundation of the world, typified in all the sacrifices of the law, is now slain, and is accepted. That Jesus who, according to his own prediction, hath expired on the cross, shall, according to his own prediction, be raised again on the third day. He is raised —he is entered into glory—he is sitten down for ever at the right hand of the Majesty on high: there he pleads the merit of his blood in behalf of those crying sins that caused it be shed. Nor does he plead in vain. The final judgment is committed to him; and the greatest of sinners that will but forsake their evil ways, have no reason to fear the severity of a Judge who hath himself been touched with the feeling of our infirmities. On the other hand, let not any deceive themselves with a vain reliance on his merits, who, after all that the Son of God hath done and suffered for them, remain impenitent. The sacrifice of the cross was no less a display of the just severity than of the tender mercy of God. The authority of his government must be maintained. This rendered intercession and atonement necessary for the pardon of sin in the first instance—the most meritorious intercession, the highest atonement. For those "who despise so great salvation," who cannot be reclaimed by the promises and threatenings of the Gospel—by the warnings of God's wrath—by the assurances

of mercy—by the contemplation of their Saviour's love—for those who cannot be reclaimed by these powerful motives from obstinate courses of wilful vice, there assuredly "remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking-for of fiery indignation," which at the last day shall burn with inextinguishable rage against these incorrigible adversaries of God and goodness. Grant, O Lord, that all we who are this day assembled before thee, lamenting our sins and imploring thy mercy, may be permitted, through the intercession of thy Son, to escape the everlasting horrors of that second death!—*Horsley.*

DEATHS.

Mr. William Sharp.—We regret to announce the death of Mr. Sharp, divinity student. We knew him well, and cordially subscribe to every thing in the following memorial of his character, from the pen of his friend and pastor, the Rev. Samuel Crookshanks, Coronery, County Cavan:—

Died on the morning of the 5th of August, at Coronery, Mr. William Sharp, student of divinity, under the inspection of the Presbyterian Secession Synod. Three months attendance at the Divinity Hall would have completed the course of his education, when he would have been licensed to preach the everlasting Gospel, of the ministry of which it is believed that he would have been a bright ornament. The Sovereign Head of the Church has thought proper to ordain otherwise. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight! The Church's loss is his gain.

Few young men have lived more beloved, or died more lamented. So mild, so gentle, and so inoffensive was the whole deportment of this amiable young man, that it is not known of a single individual surviving him whom he had offended, or who would cast a reflection on his memory. How amiable does grace, when thoroughly imbibed, render our nature even in its present forlorn and shattered condition! This respect in him for fellow-mortals flowed, it is believed, from the proper source, the fear of God reigning in the heart. It is not thought too much to say of him, in the language of inspiration, that he was blameless and harmless, a son of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom he shone as a light in the world. From the vices and even the follies of youth he was altogether free. Though acquainted with him intimately from infancy, I do not recollect a single indiscreet expression to have ever fallen from his lips. And though he cherished the fondest hopes of life throughout the greater part of his affliction, not a murmuring or impatient expression was ever heard to escape his lips. To one of his younger brothers, he confessed that he had earnestly desired to live, and that his mind had been greatly set upon his license to preach; but that now all was over. To his mother, to whom he was attached in the tenderest manner, he said, a few days before his death, when the hope of life seemed to have been

entirely given up, that it would be a poor thing to be confined in this world if there were nothing for him to do. He was a consistent member of the Temperance Society, abstaining uniformly from the use of ardent spirits. It will be gratifying to the friends of temperance to know that no spirits were distributed at his wake or at his funeral. Thus an inroad has been made for the first time upon this objectionable custom of respectable society in this neighbourhood, and the example it is hoped will not be lost.

Nothing could be more gentle than the manner of his death. He had no pain. Sometimes a severe fit of coughing would come on. On the evening previous to his death, being quite exhausted, he retired to rest at an early hour. On lying down, it soon became apparent that that night would be his last. He expressed strong desires to see his brothers and sisters, who were brought before him. One was absent, of whom he spoke in the most affectionate manner. His mind and memory, with partial aberrations, continued with him to the last: he repeated many passages and promises of Scripture, until, nature being quite exhausted, he gave up the ghost without sigh or groan. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace." His memory will long remain embalmed in the tenderest recollections of surviving friends. May the Lord sanctify this bereavement to all!

SAMUEL CROOKSHANKS.

MR. WILLIAM ROBINSON.—Died, on Thursday, the 16th of July, at Unagh, near Cookstown, in the 89th year of his age, Mr. William Robinson, for nearly thirty years a much beloved and respected elder in the Presbyterian Secession Congregation of Cookstown. Through his long life, he was respected by all denominations as a man of unspotted and upright character, the chief trait of which was a simple and frank, yet firm avowal of his sentiments. He maintained his integrity in the midst of every difficulty, without giving unnecessary offence on the one hand, or compromise of principle on the other. The faith which he professed through life he maintained until death. Some of his last expressions were "Lord Jesus, redeem my spirit"—"none but Christ." These and similar expressions he continued to repeat till the moment of his departure. Though suffering very severely, he never complained, nor once expressed a sentiment of discontent with his lot; but with the greatest composure continued unceasingly to give the most valuable advice to the many friends who came to visit him, and without a single struggle resigned up his spirit to that God who gave it. On Sabbath, the 19th, Mr. Millar, his beloved pastor, preached a sermon suited to the occasion from the first verse of the twelfth Psalm, "Help, Lord, for the goodly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men."

CALLS.—The Rev. Frederick Buick has accepted a unanimous call to the First Presbyterian Secession Congregation of Ahoghill. The Rev. Mr. Fleming has accepted a unanimous call to the Congregation of Bellaghy. The Rev. Mr. Clarke has been called to Six-mile-cross.

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